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Laura Kasischke

THE CAUSE OF ALL MY SUFFERING

My neighbor keeps a box of baby pigs
all winter in her kitchen. They are

motherless, always sleeping, sleepy
creatures of blood & fog, a vapor

of them wraps my house
in gauze, and the windows mist up

with their warm breath, their moist snores. They
watch her peel potatoes, boil

water from the floor, wearing
a steamy gown. She must be like

Demeter to them, but, like this weather
to me, this box of pigs

is the cause of all my suffering. They smell
of invalids, lotioned. Death is over there. When I

look toward my neighbor's house, I see
trouble looking back

at me. Horrible life! Horrible town! I start
to dream their dreams. I dream

my muzzle's pressed
desperately into the whiskered

belly of my dead mother. No
milk there. I dream

I slumber in a cardboard box
in a human kitchen, wishing, while

a woman I don't love
mushes corn for me in a dish. In

every kitchen in the Midwest
there are goddesses & pigs, the sacred

contagion of pity, of giving, of loss. You can't
escape the soft

bellies of your neighbors' calm, the fuzzy
lullabies that drift

in cloudy piglets across their lawns. I dream
my neighbor cuts

one of them open, and stars fall out, and roll
across the floor. It frightens me. I pray

to God to give me
the ability to write

better poems than the poems of those
whom I despise. But

before spring comes, my neighbor's
pigs die in her kitchen

one by one, and I
catch a glimpse of my own face

in the empty collection plate, looking
up at me, hungrily, one

Sunday—pink, and smudged—and ask it
Isn't that enough?